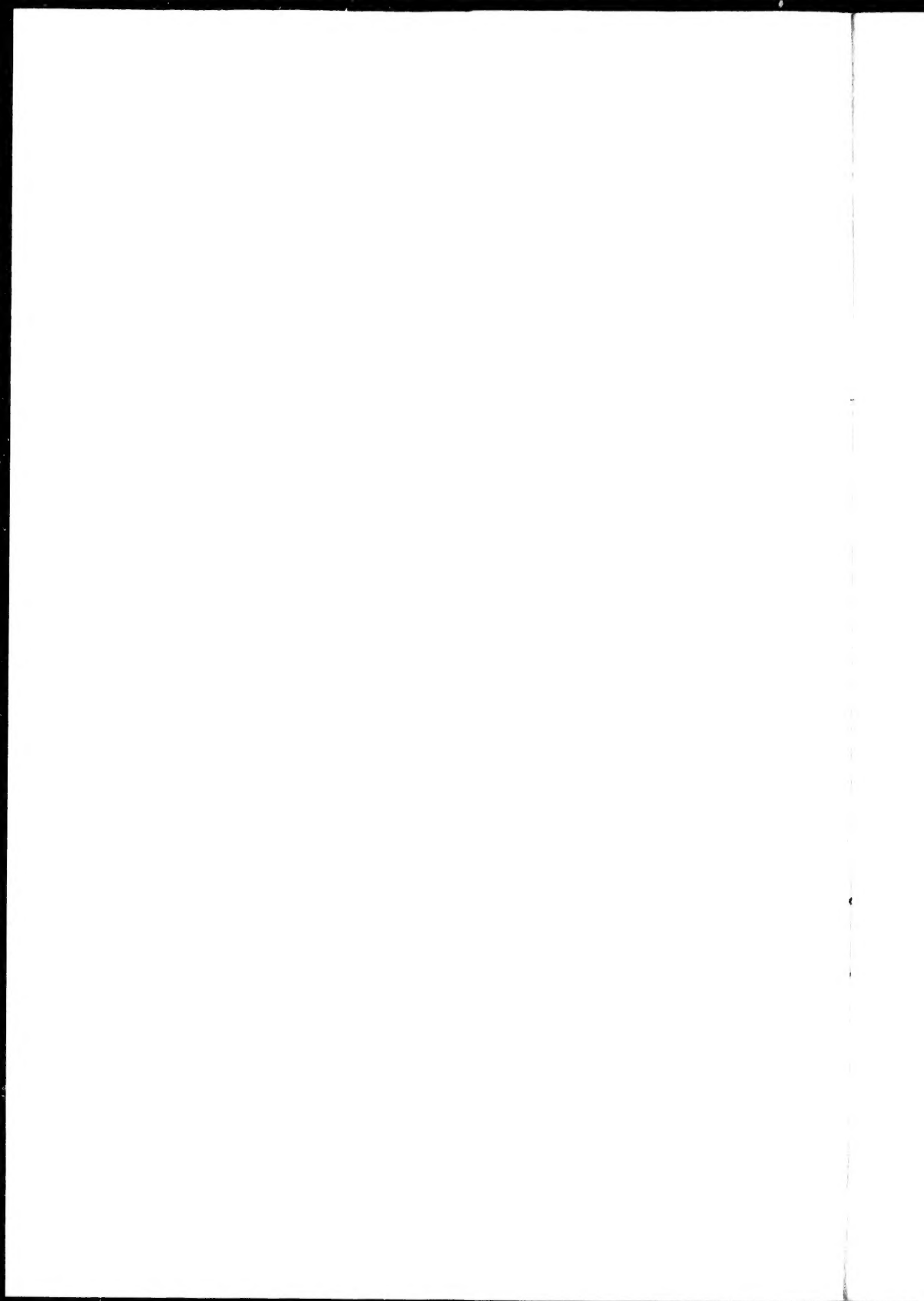




THE
INDEPENDENCE OF CANADA.

A TRACT FOR GENERAL CIRCULATION.

By A. ALISON, Esq.

Author of the Philosophy and History of Civilization.

LONDON :
JOHN REDFORD, PUBLISHER, No. 8, SLOANE STREET,

Price 1d. By post for 2 stamps.

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1865.

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By the same Author, price 10s. 6d.

PHILOSOPHY & HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION,

By A. ALISON, Esq.

LONDON : CHAPMAN & HALL, Piccadilly.

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THE INDEPENDENCE OF CANADA.

I am of opinion that England should not only not interfere with the civil war now raging in America, but that she should retire altogether from the North American Continent by declaring Canada an independent state. So long as Canada belongs to us we hold out a bait to the United States to go to war with us with a view to its annexation. That being so, it is manifestly the interest both of England and Canada to separate. The press and all our leading statesmen are unanimous in expressing their readiness to give up Canada if the Canadians themselves are willing to accept independence, and if these liberal professions on our part are sincere there will be no difficulty in effecting that object.

The great Tragan, who restored the glories of Rome, contracted the limits of the empire both in Europe and Asia, and when we withdraw our troops from Canada, and declare her independent, we shall strengthen the British Empire, for instead of that vast country contributing to the strength of England, it is a constant source of weakness. We have only to look at the map to convince ourselves that it is essential to the stability of the British Empire that Canada should be given up. By giving up Canada we lose nothing, for our trade will go on with her after she is independent the same as now. So far from losing any thing we shall be great gainers by the change, for we shall save the expense of maintaining an army and navy for her defence which would materially add to the taxation of England.

I have taken some trouble to ascertain the sentiments of the Canadians on this important point, and the result of my enquiries are, 1st, that they would prefer to remain connected with England, and 2nd, that they are satisfied if they were independent, the chances of war with the United States would be reduced in the ratio of twenty to one. Mr. Rose in his recent speech in the Canadian parliament stated that all the wars and rumours of wars in Canada arose solely out of their connection with England, a statement which confirms the information I have derived from private sources. Now I submit that the last admission here made necessarily over-rules the first, for if the chances of war are materially reduced by their independence, it must be their interest to be independent. Peace is a necessity to a young country like Canada, and that blessing by their own showing will be more securely guaranteed to them by their separation from England than by their continuing as they are.

If Canada should prefer dependence that would be no reason why we should not make her independent. We must look to our own

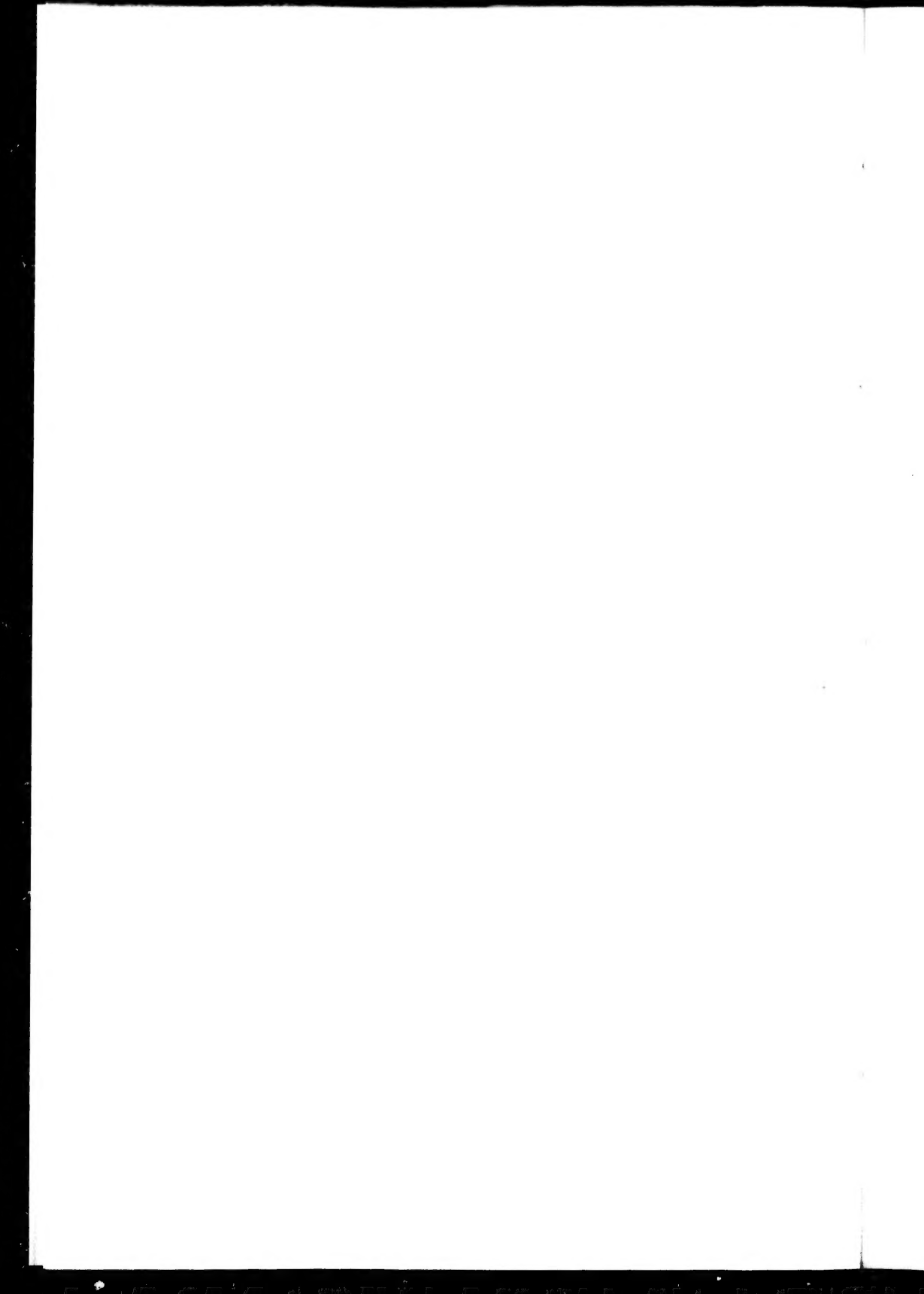
interest as well as to the interests of others, and if it can be shown that it is the interest of all parties that Canada be independent, we ought not to hesitate in making her so even although she should object to it. Two great nations like England and the United States meet each other in every quarter of the globe, and all the disputes which are ever occurring between them must eventually be settled on Canadian ground. But let Canada be an independent state and she will be a neutral power in the event of a war breaking out. Let this view of the question be clearly explained to the Canadians in a despatch properly drawn up from the Foreign Office, and the objections which they have hitherto had to independence will be removed.

But would the Canadians be able to defend themselves and remain independent if they were separate from England? This I do not doubt provided they adopt a form of government calculated to maintain peace and advance the interests of the nation. Such a government would at once be recognized by the European powers, and to these powers Canada might appeal in the event of any uncalled for attack on them by the United States. Let Canada elect a King and a Parliament, and she will be acknowledged by all the powers of Europe, when she will be in a much safer position than she is at present although she was studded all over with camps and fortifications. If the Canadians should elect one of our Princes for her king the chances are they would succeed in obtaining the consent of England and the other powers to that election. This would keep up a connection between England and Canada which would be beneficial to both parties, whereas the present connection, as shown by the Canadians themselves, is prejudicial to the interests of both countries. A commercial treaty upon the principles of free trade could be made, and if necessary a loan guaranteed by England and France, or by England alone, might be arranged, as in the case of Belgium and Greece when they were made independent states.

If Canada should refuse the offer of independence she would be unworthy of her descent as freeborn Englishmen. She would have to say, "We are weak and faint-hearted, and must refuse the liberal offers of England." Is that language becoming an Anglo Saxon race? I think not, and that being so we need not anticipate the refusal of our offer. Depend upon it, the difficulty of carrying out this great measure, so essential to the future welfare of England and Canada as well as the peace of the world, will not come from Canada but from England. Members of Parliament are ready enough to profess willingness to give up Canada, but are they sincere? Have they made the offer, or are they willing that Earl Russell should make it in their name? Let them do that, and I will answer for it that Canada will at once close with the proposal.

But it may be asked if the United States would not object to our declaring Canada an independent state, and make that change a pretext for annexing it? To this I reply that they would not and could not do so. It is an acknowledged principle of international law that every nation has the right to adopt what form of government it pleases, and if we chose to give up Canada, the Canadians have a perfect right to take what form of government they please. When France changed





from a monarchy to a republic in 1848, the new form of government was recognized, and when in 1852 that republic was converted into an empire, the change was at once ratified by England and the other cabinets of Europe. And so would it be with Canada, for when that colony becomes an independent kingdom she will be recognized by every court in Europe.

It has surprised many that the Monroe doctrine, which is inimicable to the monarchical form of government, should be so popular in America, but to those who know the facts of the case it creates no surprise. The Americans feel that their republican form of government is so weak that they are jealous of any better form of government being formed on their borders. That is the reason why President Monroe was so anxious to prevent the erection of monarchies on American soil.

The existence of the Monroe doctrine is the proof of the weakness of the republican system, for if that system was strong the Americans would have no fear of monarchies competing with republics. It is because of the weakness of the republican system and the strength of the monarchical system that the Monroe doctrine has any existence. It is only error that fears truth, and it is because republics are erroneous in principle that they fear monarchies. If the Americans really thought a republic the best they would only be too glad to be surrounded by monarchies, for that would give them an advantage over their neighbours.

I believe England and Canada were never before in such eminent peril of war and disaster as now. This is the time to arrange matters when Commissioners from the Canadian Parliament are in London. Let so good an opportunity pass and we shall find ourselves so far committed to war that it will be impossible afterwards to give up Canada however willing we might then be to do so. Every thing has its remedy if that is applied in time, but nothing can be remedied if the proper time for applying it is allowed to pass.

Now is the time for us to make up our minds to give up Canada, for that step will not only save us a world of money for the armaments which are now called for, but it will prevent the danger of war with the United States. To postpone the consideration of this important question until after we have spent our money, or until we have drifted so far into war that it is impossible to give up Canada consistent with honor would be the height of folly. I trust therefore that this important question will be taken up at once with a view to its immediate settlement.

Regrets have been expressed that the scheme of a confederacy of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick has fallen to the ground, but there is no occasion to regret that, for if the scheme had been carried it would only have served to make things worse than they are. We abolished the East India Company because of the double government which it involved. But with a Colonial confederation we should create a treble government in Canada.

There would be first, the parliament of the individual states, second the federal parliament, and third the colonial office in London, and I ask how so cumbrous and complicated a machine could be

expected to work? Almost any thing would be better than that, so that the Canadians may thank the New Brunswickers for putting a veto on their scheme. How any one in their senses, seeing how badly a confederation has worked in America, should wish to import the same system into Canada, only shows how great is the lack of statesmen worthy of the name.

The following letter, which expresses the views of a large portion of the community both in Upper and Lower Canada, is very satisfactory, and I think ought to be conclusive coupled with the testimony of the Hon. Mr. Rose in the Canadian parliament.

To A. ALISON, Esq.

London, April 13, 1865.

DEAR SIR,—I am this morning in receipt of your printed letter to the Editor of "Public Opinion." It is a curious coincidence that I should have expressed the identical views set forth in your letter last Sunday to a friend who is about to proceed to Canada.

I think the proclamation of the Independence of Canada will cut the Gordian knot of our present difficulties. I sail for New York next week en route for Montreal, where I shall always be glad to hear from you.

Yours faithfully,

E. A. P.

Now that Richmond has fallen the real difficulties of the United States will begin. After the Romans completed the conquest of Carthage, and had put the whole world under their yoke, they fell out among themselves, and the legions which had hitherto fought only with barbarians, now fought with each other. The civil war which ensued continued for no less than forty-five years, beginning with Marius and Sylla, and ending with Pompey, Julius Cæsar, Mark Antony, and Augustus. And so will it be with the United States if the cabinet of Washington do not look their difficulties in the face and apply a remedy competent to meet the vastness of the emergency. They have had four years experience of civil war, and if there are to be forty years more, as was the case with the civil war of Ancient Rome, the present generation will not see the end of it.

I am satisfied that nothing short of dividing the United States into two independent states, either as monarchies or republics, will put an end to the war or give peace and prosperity to America. Now that the rebellion has been partially put down, the cabinet of Washington can do this with honour to themselves and benefit to every state in the Union. The liberal mind deviseth liberal things, and to be generous in the hour of victory is the way for the American people to crown themselves with laurels which will never fade.

The speech of Mr. Seward the Secretary of State, delivered at Washington, on receipt of the news of the fall of Richmond, is encouraging. He, like Napoleon the third, has declared the American empire to be peace, and that her neighbours shall have full liberty to adopt what form of government they please. "Our motto henceforth," said Mr. Seward, "shall, with your permission, be this—Every nation is entitled to regulate its own domestic affairs as it pleases, and all are bound to conduct themselves so as to promote peace on earth and good will to mankind." (Great cheering).

I am only afraid that Mr. Seward promises more than he is able to perform, for unless he has the moral courage and public spirit to make those changes in the constitution that the war has rendered necessary, he will drift into revolution and war in spite of himself. That Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Seward, who could easily have prevented the war by granting the necessary changes on the Constitution demanded by the South, will now retrieve the errors of the past and save their country, is a question the future will alone disclose. One thing is certain, they must not allow events to rule them, but so to act that they may rule events. That is the office of a ruler, and I trust Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Seward will yet prove themselves to be statesmen worthy of the great nation over which they preside.

With an enormous army and navy to maintain, and an equally large debt to keep afloat, coupled with state rights and interests to maintain and reconcile, it will be impossible in my opinion to carry on the government under the present Constitution, for disaffection and rebellion will only be silenced or put down in one place to break out in another. If the states of the North could be thrown into one state, and those of the South into another state, there would be something like unity, but a Confederation of thirty-four states with their local parliaments will never answer now that the nation has become a great naval and military power.

We had at one time a federation in Great Britain, *viz.* England, Scotland and Ireland, with a parliament for each state, and the result was nothing but disaffection, revolution and war, evils which would ultimately have ruined the country. These evils were entirely removed by the union of Scotland in the year 1707, and the union of Ireland in 1800, and to these measures England owes her present greatness. Now if Great Britain found it impossible to go on with three states in federation, how is it possible to conceive that America can be governed with thirty-four sovereign states in federation? The American is a much worse case than ours, and until a union of the States is made there can be no peace and no real union.

It is only a few years since England gave up Affghanistan. After having put down the rebellion in that province we withdrew our troops and made it an independent state. India has produced some of the greatest generals of modern times, of whom I may mention Wellington, Napier, Rose, Outram and Lawrence, and this act of statesmanship shows that she has produced statesmen equally great. And if we now give up Canada with the object of removing any chances of war, that will be another proof that we do not urge self-sacrifice on our relatives in America without practising it ourselves. We will do any thing in reason to prevent war, but if the American people will not help us to keep the peace, by setting their own house in order for a permanent state of peace and prosperity, it will not be in the power of the governments either of England or America to prevent war.

Even although there was no danger of war, we ought to make Canada independent. Our duty towards that country demanded that we should have done this twenty years ago, and the sooner we perform our duty now the better it will be for the peace of the world.

While England will do its duty towards Canada irrespective of what America may do, let the Americans feel assured that we will rejoice to hear of a final settlement of their affairs, and of a war which has been almost as disastrous to Europe as it has been to America.

There can be no doubt that a war between England and the United States would be as disastrous to England as the civil war in America has been to the United States, even if we were to come off victorious. To say that there is no danger of such a war is ridiculous. Canada is quite defenceless, and what is more it is indefensible. The United States have an enormous army and navy which will soon be idle and in want of employment. They want something to re-unite them, and they imagine a foreign war would have that effect. These being the facts of the case, it is only crying peace, peace, when there is no peace, to say that there is no danger of war. The Americans have already taken one step towards war, in serving a notice on us to terminate the treaty of 1817, and the next step will be to cover the lakes with gun-boats. No; we must look to facts and not to professions of peace, and judging the question in that light it is impossible to shut our eyes to our danger.

The difficulty will be in persuading the Parliament of England to part with Canada for they are interested in holding it for the sake of the patronage it gives. But if the question of the Independence of Canada is made the turning point at the General Election in July next, we shall have such an expression of public opinion in favour of the measure that the Government will be obliged to yield.

I trust I have done my duty in pointing out what I believe to be a threatened calamity of incalculable magnitude and severity, and how that evil may be prevented. If the advice I have ventured to offer is not taken, and if war is the consequence, perhaps it will be remembered that this tract was written and no man would listen to its warning voice. If England does not make the offer to Canada there is nothing to hinder the Canadians from petitioning England to make them independent. Both countries will therefore have themselves to blame, if they are involved in war when they might have prevented it.

72, Sloane Street,
London, April 19, 1865:

